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South Haven ice skating rink to close March 2 for rebuild

School kids took advantage of Monday's Presidents' Day holiday break to enjoy South Haven's ice rink albeit a bit sloppy due to temperatures in the 50s. City officials have announced the rink will close for the season on March 2nd to allow for a major rebuild of the rink. The $800,000 project will improve the city's ice skating rink facility, including construction of a concrete pad with a more efficient in-pad cooling system.

Photo by Tom Renner

Hotel Nichols recognized as Historic Place

By James Windell

Scott Whiteford has spent years restoring the historic Hotel Nichols in downtown South Haven.

After purchasing the 100-year-old hotel in 2017, he continued working his regular daytime job and then went directly to the hotel to work at restoring it to its original elegance.

"I just love the building so much," Whiteford says, "and being placed on the National Register of Historic Places was just icing on the cake."

The Hotel Nichols was one of 13 properties in Michigan to receive the honor of being designated as a building with historic significance in 2025.

State Historic Preservation Officer Ryan Schumaker in making the announcement of the latest properties to be so honored said, "Listing in the National Register opens opportunities for economic investment and ensures that significant places from the past continue to contribute to their community's unique character."

More than 100,000 properties across the country, including nearly 2,000 in Michigan, have been listed in the National Register since the program began in the 1960s. The National Register is a program of the National Park Service and is administered by the states. The Hotel Nichols is only the third building in South Haven to receive this designation.

"This designation is incredibly important to the building, our team, and everyone in the community," Whiteford said in a recent interview at Hotel Nichols, located at 201 Center Street. "The amount of history that has occurred within these walls for over 150 years can be felt in each footstep we take. Being on the Register will allow future generations to truly appreciate what we affectionately call our very own 'living, breathing, museum.'"

Taking a tour of the hotel with Whiteford reveals his love for the building and the history associated with the hotel. He has anecdotes about many of the 19 rooms in the restored hotel. Both the original owners of the hotel (the Websters) and the second owners (the Nichols) used rooms for living quarters and offices. Whiteford points with pride at the restoration that he and his crew have done to bring the rooms up to date.

Among the accomplishments in the last several years is raising ceilings, adding bathrooms to every room, and refinishing the original woodwork throughout the building.

"I love all the original woodwork throughout the entire building," Whiteford said. "They used a lot of wood back then and this makes everything feel so warm and cozy."

He pointed out the largest suite in the building is a three-bedroom apartment with a kitchen and bedroom. That suite, Whiteford found out, had three ceilings. "Over the years there were roof leaks and those leaks were dealt with by putting up one ceiling after another," he said. He also said that the roof on the 1884 building had never been replaced and replacing the roof was a huge project.

Opened in 1925, Hotel Nichols was a hotel for people looking for lodging since it was situated just across the street from the steamship docks and around the corner from a railroad station. The original owner, E.C. Webster, also operated an artificial ice plant and an ice cream factory before expanding his business as a hotelier. The hotel also included the local Western Union office. Being placed on the Historic Register helps to recognize a building that reflects an important period in South Haven's history.

"The best kinds of history lessons are those that you can not only touch and feel with your own two hands, but those that are still functioning in relatively the same state for over 100 years!" Whiteford said. "We just couldn't be more excited to call ourselves the current 'stewards' of this amazing structure and we take it extremely seriously in ensuring that it continues operating for another 100 years."

The 25th Island Sit to raise funds for WE Care

By James Windell

In the beginning it was the Bridge Sit taking place on the Dyckman Bridge.

"The winds coming down the Black River were terrible," recalls Erika Morrison, Executive Director of WE Care I.N.C. "Then Paul Layendecker suggested we move it to the island in downtown South Haven. That has been a good move."

More than 60 volunteers will be on hand on Saturday, February 28, 2026 to take hour-long shifts standing on the island on Phoenix Street across from the South Haven City Hall to collect donations as part of WE Care's annual month-long fundraising campaign Warm Your Heart. The Island Sit, the culminating event in the campaign, is sponsored by 103.7COSY FM, along with Harbor Light Brewery and Biggby Coffee. Campaign sponsors include Jay Capmbell, Mary Hosley, and Paul Hix and Edward James Investments.

All donations throughout the month-long campaign will be matched by the sponsors. Morrison says that she expects that the Island Sit, where people can drive up and hand a donation to one of the volunteers, will raise about $10,000. The goal for the month, though, is to bring in $44,000 to provide assistance to families in need.

"We helped more than 6,300 families in 2025," says Morrison. "That means we provided assistance to about 14,500 individuals in need."

Morrison adds that other events associated with their February fundraising campaign include matching donations collected by the Kal-Haven Outpost, Clementine's restaurant donating a percentage of sales on Valetine's Day, the Soup Luncheon at St. Basil Catholic Church on February 22, and Decadent Dogs donating a percentage of sales on February 28.

Morrison says that the winter time is WE Care's busy season because there are always special concerns in the cold months. Also, she said that there is a greater need this winter as compared to some previous years. "Families that could make ends meet on their income three or four years ago are now struggling – especially with groceries tripling in cost," she says. "We see people who were donors in the past now coming to us and asking for help. Their wages just are not keeping up with the cost of living. Some of the families we see may be able to buy groceries, but they often are not keeping up with the cost of rent, their utilities or transportation."

Our goal, she emphasizes, is to help people during their times of emergency and crisis. "To help them bridge that gap."

For more information, visit the WE Care website at www.wecare-inc.org.

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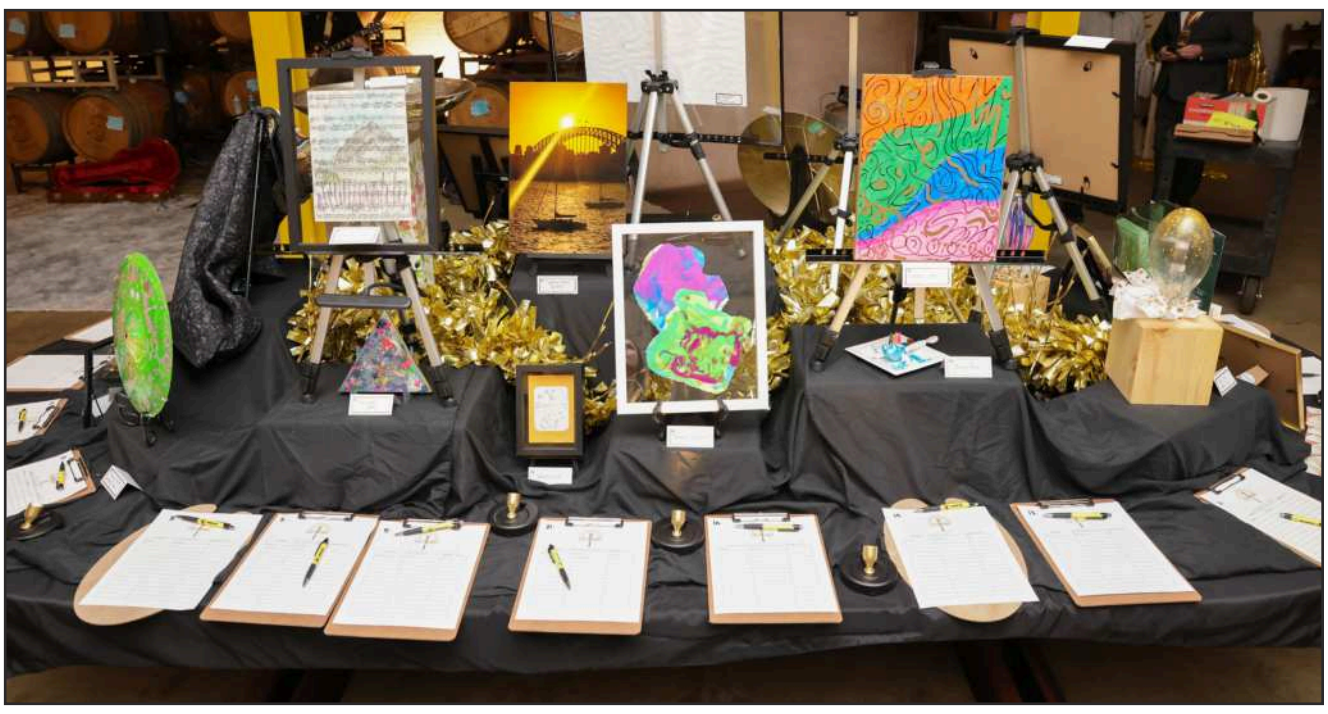
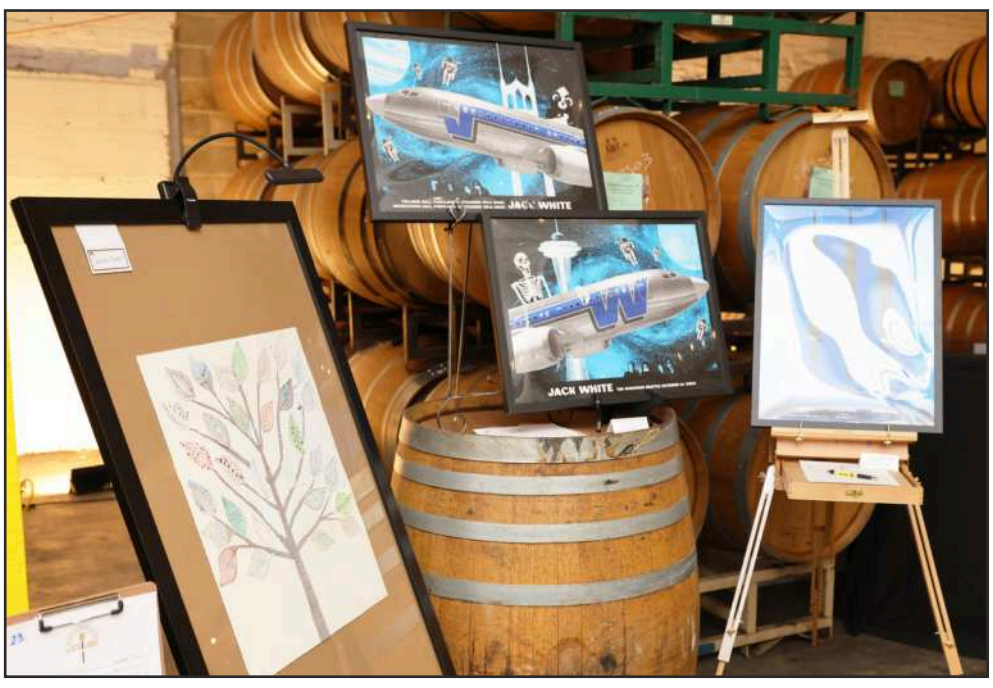
2ND FRONT PAGE

"Shine Together Gala" Saturday, Feb. 28, showcases area youth and more



For teens across the area, creativity and self-confidence often start with a spark of inspiration. Luc's Light Youth Music & Arts Foundation provides no-cost classes, shown in photos, and mentorship for young people ages 12–20, guided by skilled and inspiring instructors. Through these programs, students gain confidence, strengthen self-esteem, and develop resilience. These qualities can help them navigate school, relationships, and future opportunities while discovering new talents and pursuing their goals. The fourth annual "Shine Together Gala," will be held Feb. 28, at The Old Winery Venue in Lawton. Also shown in photos, Silent Auctions are part of the Gala's fundraising events.

Photos courtesy/Luc's Light



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Two in SH arrested on drug charges

Two men were arrested in South Haven on Wednesday after a search warrant and seizure of a gun and drugs.

The Southwest Enforcement Team (SWET), South Haven Police and Michigan State Police (MSP) executed a search warrant on Hubbard Street in South Haven.

Over a half ounce of powder cocaine, suspected methamphetamine pills, devices used for weighing and packaging narcotics, and a loaded firearm were seized, according to MSP.

As a result, a 44-year-old South Haven man was arrested and lodged in the Van Buren County Jail for possession with intent to deliver cocaine and methamphetamine, maintaining a drug house, and felony firearm.

A 42-year-old South Haven man was also arrested and lodged for possession of cocaine and maintaining a drug house.

State Senate candidate visits VBISD

LAWRENCE - Van Buren Intermediate School District (VBISD) recently welcomed Chris Moraitis, candidate for State Senate, for a visit focused on learning more about the organization's vital role in supporting schools, students, and workforce development across Van Buren County.

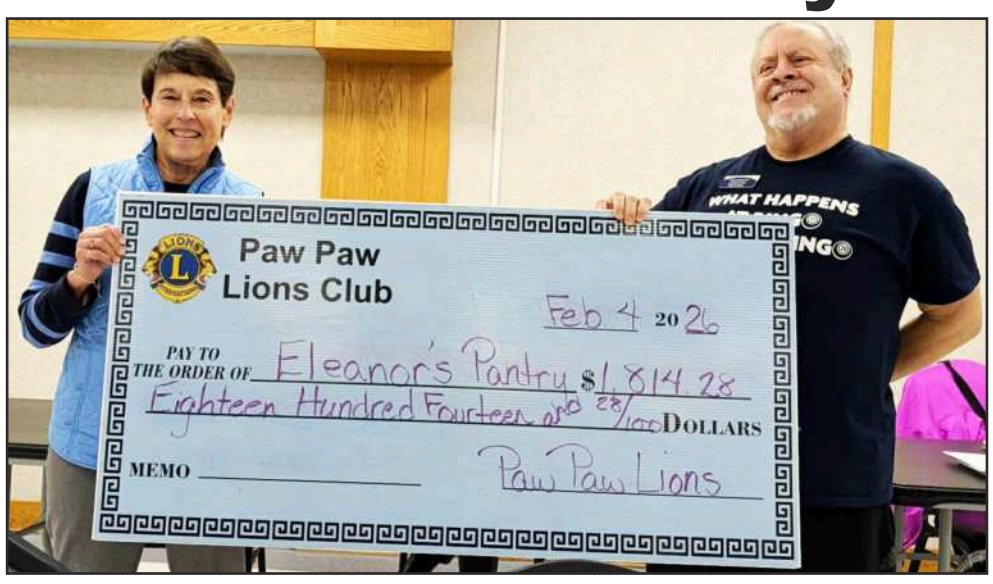
During his visit, Moraitis met with VBISD Superintendent Dave Manson, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Director Robert Smith, and a variety of instructors as he toured VBISD facilities, including Van Buren Tech (VBT).

At Van Buren Tech, Moraitis observed hands-on CTE programs that equip students with skills in areas such as Advanced Manufacturing and Polymer Technologies. These programs not only provide students with practical, real-world experience but also create pathways into high-demand careers and postsecondary education. The tour also emphasized VBISD's work in special education, career readiness, and collaborative partnerships with local businesses, ensuring all students have the support and opportunities they need to succeed.

"Thank you to the team at Van Buren ISD, including Dave Manson and Robert Smith, for welcoming me into your facility and showcasing the incredible work you do," said Moraitis. "It was inspiring to see how your hands-on programs prepare students with real-world skills and create a direct pathway into the workforce. Truly impressive work!"

VBISD continues to lead as a county-wide resource, connecting students, educators, and community partners to programs that support growth, opportunity, and success for every learner.

Lions Club donates to Eleanor's Pantry



The Paw Paw Lions Club recently donated $1,814.28 to Eleanor's Pantry. Shown in photo from left, Sue Miller, Eleanor's Pantry director, and Fran Grabowski, Paw Paw Lions Club member. Photo courtesy/Eleanor's Pantry

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A GO-TO TACKLE BOX FOR PERCH AND CRAPPIE

Perch caught on a spinner

It was cold, winter jacket weather, gloves, the whole bit. The bite was steady with a few doubles thrown in. And then the fog rolled in. I was glad that my buddy had a compass with him.

We were using the Perch Pounder rigs tipped with minnows. A bell sinker on the bottom. The Perch Pounder rigs are built with fish skin and a glow bead. This is a steady and top producer when perch are targeted.

Perch flies are another great lure. Finding a place that sells them can be a challenge. A perch fly is a small hook wrapped with tinsel and or flashabou. Some flies might have a strand of marabou, but not all.

The key is the crystal flash or the flashabou. It reflects light much like a real minnow. If you search Etsy, you will find plenty of folks who tie crappie and bluegill flies.

I suggest a glow bead. Slide a small glow egg bead onto your line, tie on the fly, and slide the glow bead down over the eye of the hook.

Ice-fishing teardrops are another of my perch favorites. I like a bright, multi-colored teardrop or a glow-in-the-dark teardrop. Perch are curious by nature, and bright, flashy colors attract them. Metallics, silvers, and golds, or a combination of the three, will also deliver big results.

In place of a sinker, use a Hali Jig. Tip the Hali with a wax worm or a spike. Do not be surprised if half of your fish come on the Hali. And remember, if it glows, it goes. Any of the glow in the dark colors will work.

A small mini worm harness is another fun perch bait. Think of a crawler harness, only much smaller. This little spinner/harness rig can be cast, drifted, or slow trolled. Tipped with a fat worm, this is often my summer favorite.

Hands down, my favorite crappie bait would be the Charlie Brewer Crappie Grub. A close second would be the action tail/twister tail. When we start casting our small jigs, it's a toss-up between the slider grub and the action tail.

Both of these are incredible crappie baits and must-have items. We use chartreuse or yellow 80% of the time. After that, maybe a white, blue, or pink color. We carry five colors.

If plastics aren't working, it's time to break out a small spinner. A favorite of mine is the Charlie Brewer Charlie Bee. This little spinner has a small willow-style blade.

A small spinner adds flash and has just a different feel on the retrieve. At times, a spinner will make a monstrous difference. Some anglers will use the old pony or horse-head style jig and spinner.

During ice-out and just before freeze-over, a marabou or hair-style jig works well. Think of the old Pinky style jig. A marabou jig dances, pulsates, and breathes. Downsize your jig. My go-to jig size is the 1/32-ounce jig.

And yes, a slip float has a place in every angler's tackle box. At ice-out, a near-stationary bait will attract crappies. Tipping a marabou jig with a minnow works wonders during the first six weeks of open water or when the fish develop lock-jaw.

Slip floats work great on perch. Early in the season, we find perch in areas with decaying vegetation. The slip float keeps your bait just off the bottom.

Being honest with you, I can't remember the last time I used a plain hook with a minnow for either crappies or perch. If I use a minnow, it's an add-on.

Tube jigs are popular with some anglers and I really should use them more. They fish faster than a marabou jig but can be fished slower than a plastic grub or action tail. They also work well under a slip float.

One plano tote will cover both species. You can keep things simple and light, and still catch a pile of fish. Stop in at Bob's Gun and Tackle Shop before spring arrives.

JACK PAYNE

Payne is a member of OWAA (outdoor writers association of America). He is an avid outdoorsperson who enjoys fishing, hunting, hiking and cooking. This column will hopefully enhance your outdoor experiences. "While I may have some knowledge, I am very fortunate that I do know many true experts that share their knowledge with me," said Payne. "Together, hopefully we all can learn and experience more fun in the great outdoors." Payne resides in southwest Michigan. His column will appear weekly in the Courier Leader/ Flashes.

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County Commissioners approve reappointments to VBCMH Board

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW - Commissioners approved a request from the Van Buren County Mental Health Board to re-appoint Carol Sjoquist and Michael Saenz to the VBCMH Board of Directors.

Debra Hess, VBCMH CEO, in a memo to commissioners, said, "Carol Sjoquist and Michael Saenz are valued members in good standing with the VBCMH Board. In addition to endorsement for re-appointment by the VBCMH Board of Directors, both applicants continue to meet state and federal requirements for appointment to a board responsible for spending federal healthcare funding. It is also important for the Board of Commissioners to know that the VBCMH Board continues to meet the standards required by Michigan law for primary and secondary consumers of mental health service for serving on the board."

Commissioners approved the re-appointment of Sandy Hanson to the Van Buren District Library Board for a four-year term from Jan. 1, 2026, through Dec. 31, 2029.

Commissioners said Hanson is the only District Library Board Trustee appointed by Van Buren County government, with the other seven District Library Board Trustees being appointed by local municipalities contained within the Library District's service area, which covers exactly two thirds of Van Buren County.

Hartford City and Township, the Village of Lawton, the Paw Paw School District, and South Haven City and Township are not contained within Van Buren District Library's service area, thus those communities have their own public libraries independent of the Van Buren District Library system.

Commissioners further stated, "Ms. Hanson is an asset to the VBDL. In addition to being an avid user of the Library District's Webster Memorial Branch, she is also a member of the Hamilton Township Board of Trustees, bringing the benefit of her public service experience to the Library Board. She is thoroughly engaged in setting the direction of the District Library, and assuring it is operated in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner. VBDL would like to continue to avail itself of Ms. Hanson's considerable knowledge, wisdom, and concern for the community."

Commissioners approved updated language to the Building Closure Policy. The Building Closures Policy is being updated to clarify expectations during delayed starts and closures and to ensure the policy is applied consistently across departments.

Key updates include tightening delayed start provisions, so employees and supervisors clearly understand what is expected. The update also clarifies that certain employees may be considered essential and may be required to report during specific delayed starts to help maintain critical building operations. Additional clarification is being added regarding timekeeping expectations, including how employees should adjust their timesheets during delayed starts and closures. Finally, the policy language is being refined to clearly state that the intent of closure and delay days is to prioritize employee safety and to make employees whole for lost time, not to provide additional pay beyond an employee's regularly scheduled workday.

Commissioners approved a request for the addition of two full-time driver positions at Van Buren Public Transit.

Some part-time drivers have been working more than the allotted part-time hours, and it has become necessary to add two full-time driver positions to accommodate. The full-time positions will be funded from the Public Transit budget.

Commissioners approved a request to approve the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) FY 2027 annual application and authorized the Board Chair to sign the contract clauses certification and resolution of intent on the Board's behalf.

Each year MDOT requires each transit agency to complete and submit an annual application and supporting documents for the next fiscal year. This is the means which MDOT uses to provide operating and capital funding to transit agencies throughout the state of Michigan. This is the portal for Public Transit to receive operating and capital funding.

Maritime Museum presents History of The Great Lakes in 12 Shipwrecks

HISTORY OF THE GREAT LAKES
In 12 Shipwrecks
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MICHIGAN MARITIME MUSEUM
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By James Windell

The history of the Great Lakes can be traced through some pivotal shipwrecks that occurred on the Great Lakes.

So says Valerie van Heest who will present a compelling new multimedia program exploring 12 historic shipwrecks when she appears at the Michigan Maritime Museum on Wednesday, February 25, 2026.

Van Heest, an historian, author, and underwater explorer, said in a recent interview that the shipwrecks collectively illustrate the evolution of commercial transportation on the Great Lakes. "As a shipwreck diver and a Great Lakes historian, I'm able to use these giant artifacts on the bottom to help tell the story of ship development, the people who sailed on them, and the disasters that befell them in the course of doing their ordinary work," van Heest said in a recent interview. "By looking at some significant shipwrecks, we get a really good picture of the past 250 years of maritime history on the Great Lakes."

Van Heest says that she put together this particular program that she will be presenting at the Michigan Maritime Museum came about as she was thinking of the 250th anniversary of our country. "As I thought about our country's history," she said, "I developed this program realizing that we've got 250 years of commercial shipping on the Great Lakes. That shipping led to the development of communities throughout the Midwest."

The stories van Heest will tell about 12 significant shipwrecks not only highlight pivotal events leading to America's founding but also trace how two and a half centuries of change have shaped both the North American landscape and the shipping industry.

Van Heest is an acclaimed underwater explorer and historian involved in the discovery and archaeological documentation of numerous Great Lakes shipwrecks. "As a diver, part of my craft is to look at the ships in person," van Heest said, "and in doing this presentation I wanted to talk about some of the most intact ships because these artifacts on the bottom offer us a way of looking at the ships that no longer exist."

Blending her maritime passion with her professional writing and design background, van Heest frequently shares her work through award-winning books, films, lectures, and museum exhibits that educate, entertain, and inspire. She is a member of the Women Divers Hall of Fame and a recipient of a Michigan State History Award for her efforts in preserving the state's submerged maritime heritage. Among her books is "Lost and Found: Legendary Lake Michigan Shipwrecks," which will be available after her presentation.

"History of the Great Lakes in 12 Shipwrecks" will be presented on Wednesday, February 25 at 6:30 pm at the Michigan Maritime Museum, 260 Dyckman Avenue, South Haven. Tickets for this event are free for Museum members and $10 for non-members. Doors open at 6:00 PM, and tickets may be purchased online, by phone, or in person. For more information, visit the Museum's website at michiganmaritimemuseum.org.

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VIEWPOINT

Congressional net worth keeps rising and nothing is being done about it

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX ■ PUBLISHER ■

For years, the public has watched members of Congress enter office with modest wealth and leave as millionaires. Lately there has been a lot of talk about Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's net worth soaring from o to $30,000,000 while holding office for only a few years. Before that it was Nancy Pelosi's net worth which had spared because of stock trades. It doesn't matter which party we are discussing, if you are elected to Congress your net worth usually increases despite a salary of $174,000.

While not every lawmaker fits that pattern, the trend is widespread enough to raise an uncomfortable question: Why does serving in public office so often coincide with becoming significantly richer?

The answer isn't singular, it's a mix of structural loopholes, weak oversight, and a political culture that has grown far too comfortable with blurred boundaries between public service and personal gain.

First, lawmakers have unusual access to market-moving information. They may not receive insider trading tips in the traditional corporate sense, but they do sit in classified briefings about industries, national emergencies, regulatory changes, and international events—information that can directly influence the stock market. Even though insider trading by members of Congress is technically illegal, enforcement has been almost nonexistent. The STOCK Act, passed with great fanfare, has proven toothless, relying heavily on self-reporting and generating little more than headlines when a violation occurs.

Then there's the revolving door. Many lawmakers know that their time in Congress, whether it lasts four years or forty, is a springboard to highly paid consulting, lobbying, or corporate board positions. The incentive to stay friendly with powerful industries is obvious: today's legislative committee assignment can become tomorrow's seven-figure job offer. When lawmakers are surrounded by people who earn fortunes influencing public policy, it's no surprise some start thinking about their own exit strategy.

Another factor is the broader ecosystem of influence—book deals, speaking fees, donor relationships, and political branding. Once a member of Congress gains national visibility, doors open. Publishers offer advances. Special interest groups pay for speeches. Media attention boosts name recognition, which often translates into opportunities completely unrelated to governing. These aren't illegal, but the optics are troubling: the wealthier and more insulated lawmakers become, the further they drift from the daily struggles of their constituents.

We also shouldn't ignore the rules they write for themselves. Congressional salaries haven't skyrocketed, but perks, allowances, benefits, and tax advantages—paired with the ability to use campaign funds for a wide range of expenses—create financial cushioning that ordinary Americans could only dream of. Add in homes, travel reimbursements, and connections to donors willing to help with everything from fundraising to consulting gigs, and the picture becomes clear.

The result is a structural problem, not a partisan one. And when public service becomes a reliable pathway to private wealth, trust erodes. Voters see the imbalance clearly: while families struggle with rising costs, many lawmakers enjoy rising fortunes.

What's needed is simple, even if it's politically inconvenient:

Ban individual stock trading for members of Congress and their immediate families.

Strengthen the STOCK Act with real enforcement, stiff penalties, and independent oversight.

Reform lobbying rules and extend cooling-off periods after leaving office.

Increase transparency on outside income, consulting work, and book deals.

Serving in Congress should be a public duty—not an investment strategy.

Don't hold your breath that changes will be made. Of course, term limits would stop the enrichment. But Congress won't enact limits and they won't stop insider trading. The money grab will continue unless we the people put a stop to it.

OBITUARIES

Katherine Gladys Mumford

Katherine Gladys Mumford, 78, of Gobles, returned to the arms of her true love on Valentine's Day 2026. She was born April 21, 1947, in Chicago, the daughter of Martin Hennig and Caroline (Roehlke) Henning.

On Oct. 7, 1967, she was united in marriage to Robert Mumford, who preceded her in death in 2005.

Katherine loved everything outdoors. She and Robert had their four-wheeler that they enjoyed many trips on. She looked forward to family cookouts in the summer, camping, and annual trips to the U.P. Tending to her flowers brought her great joy, especially white daisies. Katherine was a happy spirit and was known as the local "grandma" to many. Her grandchildren were the lit of her life. She was supportive of their activities like volleyball and taking them swimming.

She is survived by her daughter, Pamela (Nathan Harder) Forker of Gobles; two grandchildren, Mikaela (Joseph) Hill and Savannah Forker.

Family and friends were invited to visit Wednesday, Feb. 18, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Adams Funeral Home, 502 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw. Funeral services will be held (today (Thursday, Feb. 19), at 11 a.m. at the funeral home, with the Rev. Ronald C. Moritz officiating. Following services, there will be a time of food and fellowship at the funeral home. Private interment will take place at Earl Cemetery, Gobles.

Randall Lee Peat

Randall Lee Peat - devoted husband, father, grandfather, veteran, entrepreneur, and community servant - passed away peacefully on Feb. 9, 2026, at the age of 78, with his loving wife, Madelynn, by his side.

Randy was presently employed with Van Buren County as County Commissioner, where he was first elected in 2018. He served as Chairman of the Board for the past several years, streamlining processes and building many new initiatives.

Randy was born in 1948 in Chicago, IL, to Kenneth Peat and Frances (Lambert) Peat. At the age of four, his family moved to Southwest Michigan, settling in Paw Paw, where he built the strong foundation that would define his life.

After graduating with his much loved Paw Paw High School Class of 1965, he attended Western Michigan University for a time, then worked for a year before enlisting in the United States Navy where he went through S.E.R.E. (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape) training (normally reserved for pilots and special forces), before being deployed o the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. There, he served as a Head Gunner's Mate on an armored troop carrier, ATC, where he and six other men transported Army personnel to their missions. Together, they saw over 50 combat firefights. For a year, they lived on the ATC, cooked with, and showered in the water where agent orange was regularly sprayed, an experience that would affect him later in life.

Kindness and tenacity were the hallmarks of Randy's life. He fought not only for his country, but for the people around him - for his community, his Manatron employees and customers, and most of all for his family. Starting in 2005, he first faced cancer and was treated many times for metastatic tumors with strength and resilience. His family often joked that he had nine lives, because time and again he defied the odds, in part thanks to the many wonderful doctors and nurses at Bronson and Mayo Clinic.

After being released from service, Randy co-founded Manatron, Inc. with his best childhood friend, Ron Stoynoff, and his brother. What began as a small venture using punch cards in 1969 grew into a successful international software company with hundreds of employees serving many county governments.

It was at Manatron that he met Madelynn, in 1971, the woman who would become his coworker and life partner. They married in 1979 and raised their family on their cherry farm in Paw Paw. Together, they built a wonderful life, sharing over 46 years of marriage and many adventures.

While Randy was proud of the company he helped build, nothing meant more to him than family – which grew to include four children and eight cherished grandchildren. If you asked Randy what his greatest accomplishment was, his answer was always the same: his family.

In 2008, Randy, then Chairman of Manatron's Board, and Madelynn sold Manatron and entered retirement. But Randy never stopped serving others. In addition to the County Board of Commissioners, Randy also gave generously of his time and leadership to his community. He served on numerous boards and commissions, including the Van Buren Cass Health Department, Van Buren Veteran Services Committee, Van Buren County 911 Board, the Economic Development Commission (EDC), Market One Board, the Paw Paw Township Planning Commission, and the Board of Directors for Kinexus Group.

He had been involved since 1995 with the Mobile Riverine Force Association, faithfully attending their biannual reunions. He loved hosting a hospitality room for the Army and Navy veterans and their families. He had maintained lifelong bonds with his fellow "River Rats." Randy can even be seen in a cameo in their documentary, "The Mobile Riverine Force" narrated by Mike Rowe and showing on PBS.org. He is also included in the book and audiobook, 'Nightmare of the Mekong', written by his friend, Terry Sater.

For years, Randy and his lifelong friends enjoyed hunting in the U.P. every year and playing poker every week. Later, when his sons grew up, they often went along.

Randy is survived by his beloved wife, Madelynn (Field) Peat; his brothers, Allen (Delores) Peat and Gregory Peat: his daughter, Lori (Darren) Mackey and their daughters, Rachel and Lauren; his daughter, Angela Peat (Ryan McCarthy); his son, David (Grace) Peat and their daughters, Charlotte, Sophie, and Elizabeth; and son, Daniel (Leah) Peat and their children, Violet, Arthur, and Louis. Randy is also survived by Madelynn's nine siblings and spouses and many cherished nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Kenneth and Frances Peat.

Randy was prepared for anything and wanted to make sure the people he loved were, too. Many of his family and friends carry flashlights, emergency bags and first aid kits in their cars that he thoughtfully assembled. To be loved by Randy was to be cared for in the most practical yet generous ways. If he saw something he thought you might need someday, he made sure you had it. It was his way of looking out for the people around him, making them feel safe, supported, loved and remembered.

Family and friends are invited to visit on Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Old Winery Venue (Lawton Community Center) 646 Nursery Street, Lawton, from 2 to 4 p.m. A memorial service will begin at 4 p.m. with military honors. Everyone is welcome to stay to celebrate Randy's life until 8 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Van Buren Youth Camp, 12370 45th St., Bloomingdale, MI, 49026, where generations of the Field and Peat family and friends have spent time as campers, staff and on the board, Donations may also be made to the Lawrence American Legion Post 174, 130 E. Saint Joseph St., Lawrence, MI, 49064.

Share a memory or sign the online guestbook at: adamspawpaw.com

Sheriff's Report- Sheriff's Office Uniform Response handles more than 4,000 calls in January

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Uniform Response handled 764 calls for service in January, with 291 traffic stops. Dispatch took 4,072 calls in January, according to Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

"Uniform Response assisted Berrien County with a pursuit that came into our county involving a truck that just was stolen. The pursuit came to an end in Bangor Township with multiple units around it. The suspect did not cooperate and was tased along with a canine being deployed. He was placed in custody and taken back to Berrien County to face multiple charges," said Sheriff Abbott.

Uniform Response was dispatched to a suspicious vehicle parked in a driveway with an individual in it. The driver would not exit the vehicle or cooperate with the deputies on scene. Deputies ultimately extricated the individual from the vehicle. Once secured, a pistol was found in his waistband. He was lodged on multiple charges for the incident.

Uniform Response was dispatched to Pine Grove Township for a BOL (be on lookout) vehicle for a possible intoxicated driver. Deputies found the vehicle, conducted a traffic stop on it due to the driving, and found the driver was indeed intoxicated. An investigation was conducted which led to the driver being lodged on operating under the influence of alcohol (second offense) and open intoxicants in a motor vehicle. "Thank you to the public for calling this in so the driver could be stopped," said Sheriff Abbott.

Seasonal Weight Restrictions (Frost Laws) went into effect 6 a.m. Monday, Feb. 16, for the Van Buren County road system.

"Uniform Response deputies completed First Aid Training this past week. Deputies reviewed the use of tourniquets, CPR, responding to choking individuals, and other first aid responses set forth by the American Heart Association," said Sheriff Abbott.

"Our Dive Team did their yearly Ice Dive Training this past week on Lake Brownwood. The dive team trains numerous times a year doing river dives, ice dives, lake dives, and at times pool dives to work on different things related to dives," said Sheriff Abbott.

"Roses are red, violets are blue, if your ex has a warrant, we'll come get them for you. On behalf of the Sheriff's Office, we'll wish them Happy Valentine's Day, so feel free to let us know," said Sheriff Abbott.

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Pullman Elementary
January Students of the Month

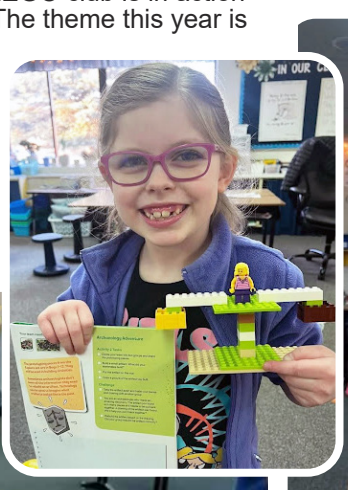
Congratulations to our amazing January Students of the Month: Fayelynn Reed, Freyja Ortiz, Analissee Ortiz, Tucker Wendt, Mareli Salazar, Ka'Miah Jackson, Brantley McCaig, Mateo Cleto, Brayden Fitzhugh, Everleigh Zamora, and Raiden Todd! These outstanding students show their Cardinal PRIDE every single day. Way to go!

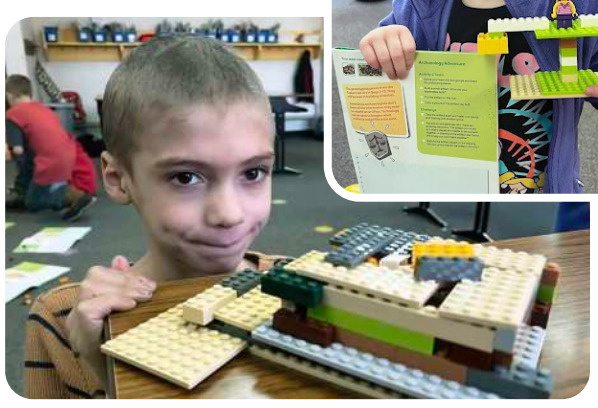
Celebrating Student Success:
Hard Work Pays Off in Math and Reading

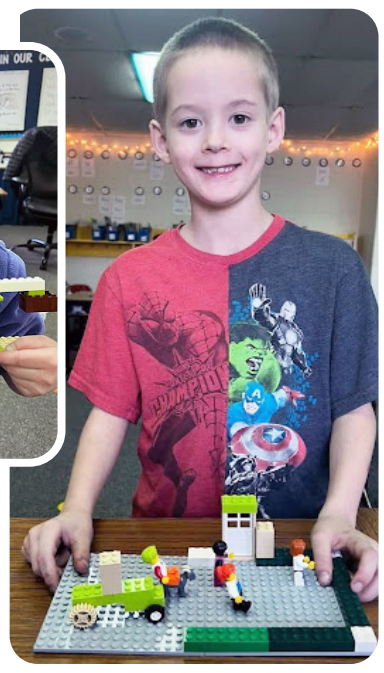
We are incredibly proud of our Pullman Elementary students who achieved top scores and demonstrated outstanding growth on the NWEA math and reading assessments. To celebrate these impressive accomplishments, students were honored with a well-deserved, special pizza lunch. Congratulations on your hard work and commitment to excellence!

Pullman Elementary LEGO Club

Pullman Elementary's LEGO club is in action again this school year. The theme this year is "Unearthed." Students will learn and create projects around archaeology. If you'd like to see what they are building, follow Cardinal Master Builders: FIRST LEGO League Explore Team #18236 on Facebook!







Bloomingdale Elementary: Ice Skating

During the first week of February our students went ice skating at the South Haven Ice Rink. We had lots of fun (and lots of falls!). Our students would like to thank our AWESOME PTO for sponsoring the trip.

Before/After School Enrichment Program

We have recently started a Before/After School Enrichment program at Bloomingdale Elementary. If you are interested in having your child participate, please give us a call.

Mother/Son Dodgeball Showdown

We recently held a Mother/Son Dodgeball Showdown. It was an action-packed night of laughs, teamwork, and friendly competition. While we won't disclose which team came out on top, we can say that many wonderful memories were made.

Bloomingdale Athletic's: Hall of Fame

The Bloomingdale Athletics Hall of Fame honors exceptional athletes, coaches, teams, and contributors whose influence extends beyond wins and records. Inductees are celebrated not only for their athletic achievements, but also for their leadership, character, and commitment to fostering the spirit of Cardinal pride within our school and community.

Through the Hall of Fame, we celebrate the rich history of Bloomingdale Athletics while preserving the legacy of those who have played a meaningful role in shaping our programs. Each year, a selection committee carefully reviews nominations submitted by alumni, staff, and community members to ensure that individuals who exemplify excellence both on and off the field are honored for generations to come.

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME
Saturday, May 2nd, 2026
The Silo Banquet Hall

Winterfest Brings Energy, Excitement, and Cardinal Pride to Bloomingdale!

On Friday, January 30th, Bloomingdale Middle and High School was filled with excitement, laughter, and Cardinal spirit during this year's Winterfest assemblies! Students and staff gathered in the middle and high gymnasiums for an unforgettable celebration packed with friendly competition, music, games, and community pride.

The Winterfest assemblies showcased the very best of Bloomingdale — school spirit, positive energy, and students cheering one another on. From high-energy class competitions to staff-versus-student challenges, the gyms were alive with enthusiasm. Students proudly represented their grade levels, competing in creative and spirited games that had the entire crowd on its feet.

One of the highlights of the event was the staff participation. Teachers and administrators joined in the fun, demonstrating that Winterfest is not just about competition — it's about connection. The laughter and camaraderie between students and staff created a memorable experience that strengthened the positive culture within the building.

Beyond the games and excitement, Winterfest reflects Bloomingdale's commitment to building community. Events like this reinforce the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship, and celebrating one another. The assemblies provided students with an opportunity to step away from their daily routines and simply enjoy being part of something bigger — Cardinal Nation.

Principal Brandon Lukes shared his appreciation for the student body's energy and behavior throughout the event.

"Winterfest is a special tradition because it brings us together," Lukes shared. "The school spirit, respect, and sportsmanship displayed by our students truly demonstrate what it means to be a Cardinal. We are proud of how our students represent our school."

The success of Winterfest would not have been possible without the dedication of student leaders, staff organizers, and volunteers who worked behind the scenes to make the event run smoothly.

As the cheers echoed through the gyms and the final competitions wrapped up, one thing was clear — Winterfest once again delivered a powerful reminder that Bloomingdale Middle and High School is more than just a school. It's a community united by pride, positivity, and tradition.

Building Habits for Success:
Cardinal Pride Breakfast Honors Students

On the mornings of Wednesday, January 28th, and Thursday, January 29th, Bloomingdale Middle and High School proudly hosted the "Cardinal Pride Breakfast" to honor students in grades 6 through 12 who have demonstrated commendable attendance. This special event recognized students who have maintained three or fewer tardies across all classes. A total of 324 students were invited to attend these celebratory breakfasts.

Organized by the Cardinal Pride Team, the event is part of the school's PBIS initiative to promote and celebrate positive attendance — a continued priority and focus at Bloomingdale Middle and High School.

Assistant Principal Nikki Meloche spoke with pride about the students being honored and emphasized the importance of developing consistent attendance habits.

"We're incredibly proud of our students who have shown their commitment to being here and learning," shared Assistant Principal Meloche. "Developing consistent attendance is more than just showing up; it's a skill that will serve our students in college, careers, and beyond. Today, we were able to recognize their dedication and celebrate the investment they are making toward a successful future."

Principal Brandon Lukes also welcomed students and their families, reinforcing the importance of punctuality in achieving success. He reminded students that being on time and prepared creates opportunities, noting that "the early bird gets the worm."

Looking ahead to Quarter 3, the criteria for the Cardinal Pride Breakfast will continue to include the punctuality component. In addition, a behavioral component has been added: students must have no in-school or out-of-school suspensions during the quarter to qualify.

Bloomingdale Middle and High School remains committed to recognizing students who model positive habits that contribute to academic achievement and lifelong success.

Six SH wrestlers advance to regionals

South Haven will send six wrestlers, four boys and two girls, to the Regionals on Saturday, Feb. 21 at Belding High School.

DISTRICT WRESTLING HIGHLIGHTS - Advancing to Regionals

BOYS: South Haven was led by Zayden Rowland (144) who finished second, with Gabriel Saucedo (175) and Tyler Moorehouse (285) each placing third and Kenan Harris (190) coming in fourth.

Kaelyn Adamson

GIRLS: Kaelyn Adamson (110) won a district championship, and was joined in qualifying by teammate Maddie Moore (110) in third.

Gobles wrestlers set school record

Gobles wrestlers had a big day at the district tournament last weekend.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

Gobles set a new school record in last week's district with eight Regional Qualifiers.

Stat leaders were Finn Carlin and Aiden Dukes who finished as District Champions

Details about the event:

Individual districts were held in Bangor on February 14, 2026.

Gobles contributors were as follows:

120 – Danny Timms, 3rd Place

132 – Hunter Piper, 2nd Place

138 – Aiden Dukes, 1st Place

144 – Finn Carlin, 1st Place

144 – Justin Ray, 2nd Place

150 – Devin Doorlag, 3rd Place

157 – Colton Collingsworth, 3rd Place

190 – Brody Marshall, 2nd Place

"In a season defined by grit and rapid progression, freshman wrestler Justin Ray has officially transitioned from the developmental squad to a regional contender. Justin, who began the year on the Junior Varsity (JV) roster, capped off his impressive debut campaign by securing a spot as a Regional Qualifier," coach Erin Carlin said. "The freshman's journey has been a testament to consistent improvement.

"Early in the season, Justin was honing his skills on the developmental squad, but his work ethic quickly caught the attention of the coaching staff. We knew the potential was there, and Justin has become one of the hardest workers in the room. His steady climb through the ranks culminated in a series of gritty performances on the mat where he fought for every position."

The Regional Championships are in Martin on Feb. 21, 2026.

"We would have liked to take home more District Championships, but we find promise in the fact that most of our wrestlers won their finals matches," Carlin said.."The boys have been practicing well and finishing strong."

Gobles girl wrestler earns bronze medal

Gobles girls wrestlers compete in the districts last weekend,

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — On Sunday the Gobles varsity girls wrestlers traveled to Dowagiac compete for a district title.

"All five of our girls showed heart and each of them should be proud of themselves and their accomplishments this year," coach Dan Morris said. "They've built a foundation for themselves to grow and for the future of Gobles girls wrestling.

"First-year wrestler and junior Ashlyn Myers was a force to be reckoned with all day. After pinning her first opponent in the first period, Ashlyn fell victim to pin in her next match to a very tough Three Rivers wrestler. She hit a mental redirect and worked her way through the consolation bracket. She showed grit and determination while wrestling with great mat awareness and body control.

"After two more wins by pin, she earned a spot at regionals and the opportunity to wrestle for third place. Ashlyn stepped to the line ready to roll and wrestled her heart out, pinning her opponent early in the second period, and earning herself a bronze medal."

Myers will make the trip to Portage Northern on Sunday to wrestle the best in the area with an opportunity for a regional title, and to wrestle at Ford Field for the state finals.

Bangor girls fall to 8-10

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BANGOR — Bangor record falls to 8-10 in girls basketball on Feb.. 13 after a 41-38 loss to Hartford.

Hartford had quarter totals of six, 18, 10 and seven.Bangor had quarter totals of five, eight, nine and 16.

Leading rebounders were Cielo Maldonado five and Lexi Wiesniewski four.

Leading in assists were Alexis Wiesniewski four and Madison Lennox three,

Steal leaders were Amiyah Corona with four and Izzy Horvath with three.

Wisnewski scored 11 points while Corona had nine, Horvath had seven and Lennox had six. Maldonado had five points.

Bangor lost 60-22 on Feb. 10 to Cassopolis.

Horvath had seven rebounds and Maldonado had six. Horvath and Lennox had two rebounds apiece.

Wisnewski led Bangor with 11 points.

Bangor has home games with Centreville on Feb. 17. Bloomingdale on Feb. 20 and Comstock on Feb. 24.

Mattawan girls notch huge road win

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTTAWAN — Mattawan used a 12-4 third quarter to build a 29-17 lead headed into the fourth and went on to a 37-28 over Portage Northern on Feb. 16 in girls basketball action.

A Chloee Bontrager triple gave the Wildcats a 32-17 lead to start the fourth and Mattawan was able to maintain a 9-to-10 point lead down the stretch to get their fourth straight road victory.

Mattawan improves to 6-10 and PN falls to 4-14. Mattawan will play another make-up game Wednesday at home against St. Joseph.

On Feb. 13, Mattawan lost to Battle Creek Lakeview 57-42.

Lakeview held a 23-19 first half lead in Mattawan. BC Lakeview won the third quarter 20-12 and maintained a comfortable double digit fourth quarter lead.

Mattawan was led by Caitlin Ryan with 15 and Charlotte Douglass with 13.

It was 50-40 over Kalamazoo Central on Feb. 10. Mattawan won its third road game in five days after beating a Kalamazoo Central team that had won eight in a row leading up to the contest.

Caitlin Ryan scored 22 and Charlotte Douglass scored 13 to lead the Wildcats while Annemarie Pelak and Savannah Waterlander had strong rebounding and defensive performances.

Lawton wrestlers lose in districts

By John Raffel
Correspondent

LAWTON — Lawson lost to Decatur 57-6 in team district action on Feb. 12.

Trenton Bigelow led Lawton with a pin in 1:22 over Jacob Hensley at 120 pounds.

Connor Gaylor Jacob Boswell, Cameron Vyvermank Marco Garcia Rydeer Brooks, Eri Guideback, Cody Polis, Landen Streich, Williams Tabor, AJ Terry and Lucas Boswell also wrestled for Lawton.

Lawton had two wrestlers place in the top four at the individual district on Saturday and two wrestlers finished third and fourth to advance to the regionals this Saturday.

The top three wrestlers in each weight class advanced to regionals.

Armijo won his third-place match with a 17-1 win over Quentin Kosmerick of Coldwater. Gunner Gale lost his third-place march 12-3 to Gabriel Smith of Edwardsburg.

AJ Terry at 106 pounds pinned Colton Cady of Decatur in 3:46 for third place. Vyveman was pinned at 144 pounds by Sawyer Vankuiken of Saranac and settled for fourth place.

South Haven girls defeat Allegan

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven's girls basketball team improved to 10-7 after a 53-13 win over Allegan on Feb. 16.

South Haven last week lost to Saugatuck 46-42, beat Bridgman 54-23 and lost to Niles Brandywine 73-30.

South Haven is at Kalamazoo Christian on Feb. 18.

Earlier this season, South Haven went 15 days without playing a game because of cancellations. They lost to Zealand West 42-33 with Ly'Nique Cunningham scoring 21 points and adding five steals and three rebounds.

Nevaeh Cooper had five points and seven rebounds.

South Haven beat Coloma 63-28. Cunningham had 29 points, eight seals, five rebounds and three assists. Madi Duda had 10 points, six rebounds and two steals. Ja'Niyah Langston had eight points, 11 rebounds and three assist. Neveah Cooper had eight points, six rebounds and two steals.

Charlotte Grzybowski, Olivia Weaver and Ashlynn Covey all added three points each.

Paw Paw wrestling season ends

By John Raffel
Correspondent

PAW PAW — Paw Paw lost 64-17 to Richland Gull Lake in district semifinal wrestling action on Feb. 12.

There were three winners for Paw Paw.

Aaron Quiles (285) won by forfeit. Gunner Gales (190) won 19-2 over John Burke and Kholby Armijo (165) pinned Julian Granger in 2:47.

Paw Paw completed in the individual districts on Saturday and two wrestlers finished third and fourth to advance to the regionals this Saturday.

The top three wrestlers in each weight class advanced to regionals.

Armijo won his third-place match with a 17-1 win over Quentin Kosmerick of Coldwater. Gunner Gale lost his hied-place march 12-3 to Gabriel Smith of Edwardsburg.

Gobles cheerleaders take fifth

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — The Gobles competitive cheer ladies wrapped up league finals with their highest score of the season last weekend, holding on to their fifth place finish.

"This team continues to show growth, grit, and determination each time they step on the mat," Gobles cheer coach Sarah Ashbrook said. "At Portage Central High School, the team faced unexpected challenges—battling illness and having to rework routines and compete with fewer athletes. Despite the adversity, they delivered their second-highest score of the season, proving once again their ability to rise to the occasion and adapt under pressure.

"This young GVCT team continues to amaze every single day with their resilience, work ethic, and commitment to one another. Even after another tough week of sickness, they are back on track, refocused, and working hard to give their best performance yet at Districts, hosted close to home in Bloomingdale.

"We are proud of how far they've come—and we can't wait to see them shine."

Competitive cheer districts are this weekend and teams will bid to advance to regionals next weekend.

=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

PORTER TOWNSHIP
Van Buren County
88040 M-40 Lawton, MI 49065
Regular Meeting
January 14, 2026

Supervisor Oxley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present – Oxley, Bitely, Nesbitt, Packer, and Smith. Also present – Attorney Moraitis and two guests.

- Motion by Bitely with support by Nesbitt to approve the minutes of the regular and special meetings on December 10, 2025. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Smith with support by Packer to approve the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to approve the bills as presented. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Smith with support by Nesbitt to amend the General Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026 in summary form. Total revenue of $1,141,440 less total expenditures of $1,568,904 for a net decrease in fund balance of $427,464. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Smith support by Nesbitt to approve the 2026 Poverty Guidelines as presented. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to hire Lockmaster Security to set up key tag access to the township hall addition, at a cost not to exceed $2,800. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Bitely with support by Packer to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 pm. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Heather Smith
Porter Township Clerk

PAW PAW TOWNSHIP
SYNOPSIS OF MEETING
February 9, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Meeting Called to Order by Supervisor Palenick 6:00 P.M.
Board Members Present: Thomas Palenick, Dennis Reynolds, Rebecca Payne, James DeGroff, Lisa Zinkil
Absent: None
Guest Present: Diana and Bryan Stump.

- Approved January 12th, 2025, meeting minutes.
- Approved payment to Market One.
- Approved lowering price on 104 municipal lane.
- Approved Ordinance 295 amendment on STR.
- Approved budget amendments.

Meeting Adjourned 7:11 P.M.
Rebecca F. Payne, Clerk

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The Lucille S Brizendine Trust u/a/d October 16, 2016, as amended.
Date of Birth: September 17, 1929

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Lucille S. Brizendine, who lived at 23332 Red Arrow Highway, Mattawan, Michigan 49071, died December 6, 2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Linda Mathews, Trustee, 25271 Eisenhower Drive, Mattawan, Michigan 49071 within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: February 19, 2026

State of Michigan
Probate Court
County of Van Buren
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S TRUST
ESTATE
DECEDENT: NORMA RUSSELL

Date of Birth: November 9,1935
TO ALL CREDITORS:
NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Norma Russell, who lived at 64045 CR 657, Lawton, Michigan 49065 died December 1,2025.. There is no probate estate.
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against **NORMA RUSSELL OR THE RUSSELL- ARNIE FAMILY TRUST dated October 28,2011, as amended September 29,2021** will be forever barred unless presented to **Gina Cheek,** the named successor trustee within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

February 16, 2026

Attorney:
William B Millard #P39054
DeMent and Marquardt, PLC
211 E. Water Street, Suite 401
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
269-343-2106
Trustee:
Gina Cheek
1691 Linden Trail
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-615-9152

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Jason Garcia; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/19/2026; Atty File #: 528265F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 19, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Jason Garcia, married man
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): AMERIHOME MORTGAGE COMPANY, LLC
Date of Mortgage: June 14, 2024
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 1, 2024
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $287,159.24
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Pine Grove, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Lot 1, Woodland Estates, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Liber 8 of Plats, page 157, Van Buren County Records.
Common street address (if any): 33610 Pinedale Ln, Gobles, MI 49055-8226
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 19, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1584882

(02-19)(03-12)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Douglas A Clark; Atty: SOTTILE and BARILE PLLC - SOTTILE and BARILE PLLC; 1st Pub: 2/12/2026; Atty File #: MF2512008; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE
THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT THE NUMBER BELOW IF YOU ARE IN ACTIVE DUTY. ATTN PURCHASERS: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Under the power of sale contained herein in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or a cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in VAN BUREN County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 19, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE SALE – Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Douglas A. Clark and Brenda M. Clark, a married couple, original mortgagors, to Citifinancial, Inc., dated March 18, 2009, and recorded March 31, 2009 in Liber 1516, Page 577, in VAN BUREN County records, Michigan, and assigned to CitiFinancial Servicing LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on June 30, 2017 in Liber 1654, Page 815, and assigned to Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on June 30, 2017 in Liber 1654, Page 816, and assigned to Nationstar Mortgage LLC by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on September 20, 2022 in Liber 1743, Page 666 and assigned to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-TIKI Series V Trust by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on May 8, 2023 in Liber1752, Page 618 and assigned to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-Ranch Series V Trust by an Assignment of Mortgage recorded on May 8, 2023 in Liber 1752, Page 619, and, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Ninety Two Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Nine and 74/100 dollars ($92,959.74). Said premises are situated in the City of DOWAGIAC, County of VAN BUREN, and State of Michigan, and particularly described as: Lot 3, Lakeland Terrace according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 35, Van Buren County Records
Property Address:66901 M 152, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047
Parcel No.: 80-12-120-002-00
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Dated: February 12, 2026 For more information, please call: (513) 444-4100 Sottile and Barile PLLC Attorneys for Plaintiff 394 Wards Corner Boulevard, Suite 180 Loveland, OH 45140 File MF2512008 - Moore, Brenda - JR

(02-14)(03-07)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Mervin E Mortimore Jr; Atty: BETTER CHOICE NOTICE SOLUTIONS - BETTER CHOICE NOTICE SOLUTIONS; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 25-34417; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM, on March 12, 2026. The amount due on the Mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage made by Mervin E. Mortimore, Jr. Marr and Lori Mortimore Marr to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated September 9, 2003 and recorded September 25, 2003 in Liber 1396 at Page 631, Van Buren County, Michigan. Said Mortgage is now held by Fifth Third Bank, National Association by assignment and/or merger. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $66,383.42. Said premises are located in Van Buren County, Michigan and are described as: 04048925/74201 28th Street, Lawton, MI, 49065 Property located in the Township of Porter, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan
Parcel # 80-16-003-011-00
THE NORTH 17 3/8 ACRES OF THE WEST 136 ACRES OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 3, TOWN 4 SOUTH, RANGE 13 WEST, ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT SURVEY THEREOF. INSURANCE Said property is commonly known as 74201 28TH ST, Lawton, MI 49065. The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages, if any, are limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Please be advised that any third party purchaser is responsible for preparing and recording the Sheriff's Deed. If this is a residential Mortgage, the following shall apply: ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT, AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. IF YOU: ARE A DEBTOR IN AN ACTIVE BANKRUPTCY CASE; ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A BANKRUPTCY STAY; OR, HAVE RECEIVED A DISCHARGE IN BANKRUPTCY AND YOU HAVE NOT REAFFIRMED THE DEBT, THIS NOTICE IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT FROM YOU PERSONALLY. Dated: January 29, 2026 Attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage: Thomas E. McDonald (P39312) Brock & Scott, PLLC 5431 Oleander Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 PHONE: (844) 856-6646 File No. 25-34417

(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Kevin R. Brown; Atty: Orlans; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 26-000823; Insurer: GNMA
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM on MARCH 5, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Kevin R. Brown, a married man, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Mortgage 1 Incorporated, Mortgagee, dated May 25, 2022 and recorded May 27, 2022 in Liber 1738, Page 661 Van Buren County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by Siwell Inc. DBA Capital Mortgage Services of Texas, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand One Hundred Sixty-Six and 69/100 Dollars ($198,166.69).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Van Buren County, Michigan at 1:00 PM on MARCH 5, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Almena, Van Buren County Michigan, and are described as:
Lot 9, FILIPUNAS PLAT, according to the plat thereof as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 100, Van Buren County Records.
47041 County Road 653, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: February 5, 2026
File No. 26-000823
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400

(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Phyllicia Eubanks; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 512288F04; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Phyllicia J. Eubanks, a single woman
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS OWNER TRUSTEE FOR RCF 2 EBO TRUST
Date of Mortgage: February 13, 2020
Date of Mortgage Recording: February 21, 2020
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $251,108.77
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Village of Lawton, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: LOT 9, NORTH POINT WOODS, AS RECORDED IN LIBER 8 OF PLATS, PAGE 167, VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS.
Common street address (if any): 1015 Point Way, Lawton, MI 49065-8797
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 5, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1583929

(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: RON CRAFT; Atty: Schneiderman & Sherman, P.C. - Schneiderman & Sherman, PC; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: 25-002098-3; Insurer: (unknown)
SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - VAN BUREN COUNTY Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): RON CRAFT and SUZANNE BURROWS-CRAFT, Husband and Wife Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns Date of mortgage: April 28, 2004 Recorded on May 11, 2004, Liber 1413, on Page 644, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON FKA THE BANK OF NEW YORK, AS TRUSTEE FOR THE CERTIFICATEHOLDERS OF THE CWABS INC., ASSET-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2004-6 Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: Fifty-Five Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty-Five and 24/100 Dollars ($55,785.24)
Mortgaged premises: Situated in Van Buren County, and described as: BEGINNING ON THE NORTH LINE OF CASS STREET AT A POINT 465.00 FEET EAST OF THE WEST SECTION LINE; THENCE WEST, 102.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH, 86.50 FEET; THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY PARALLEL WITH MONROE STREET, 112.20 FEET; THENCE SOUTHERLY TO BEGINNING, BEING A PART OF BLOCK 8, MONROE`S ADDITION TO THE CITY OF BANGOR, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN AS RECORDED IN LIBER 1 OF PLATS, PAGE 17, VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS.
Commonly known as 108 E Cass St, Bangor, MI 49013
The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
The Bank of New York Mellon fka The Bank of New York, as Trustee for Certificateholders of the CWABS Inc., Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2004-6 Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400
1583433

(01-29)(02-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Mark A Redfern; Atty: Johnson, Blumberg, and Associates - Johnson, Blumberg, and Associates ; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: MI 26 6935; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in VAN BUREN County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this informa

Continues on page 10

The Van Buren Intermediate School District is now accepting bids for the replacement of classroom cabinets including removal and disposal of existing cabinets, countertops, backsplash, plumbing fixtures, and installation of new cabinets, countertops, backsplash, and plumbing fixtures located at 705 S. Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI 49064 as outlined in the bid packet. Bid packets are available for download at *www.vbisd.org* under District Services – Business Office. Bids are due **February 25, 2026, at 2:00 PM** at the Van Buren Intermediate School District Business Office, 490 S. Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI 49064, at which time bids will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids received after that time will not be accepted and returned unopened. The Board of Education shall not accept a bid unless it includes both sworn and notarized familial affidavit and Iran linked business affidavit. The Van Buren Intermediate School District reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any irregularities which it deems to be in the best interest of Van Buren Intermediate School District, and the right to award the contract to other than lowest bidder.

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP
INVITATION TO BID

Bloomingdale Township is soliciting proposals for qualified providers to provide cemetery maintenance and Sexton services to Bloomingdale Township. The contractor must be capable and willing to provide services as outlined by the Board. Contractors can contact Bloomingdale Township, 109 E. Kalamazoo St., PO BOX 11, Bloomingdale, MI 49026 (269) 521-3800 ext 3 for further information or to obtain a bid packet.

Sealed Bids must be to Bloomingdale Township no later than 1:00pm
On March 18, 2026. The Township Board reserves the right to reject any and all sealed bids.

Melanie Kelly, Township Clerk

=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

Continues from page 9

tion. MORTGAGE INFORMATION: Default has been made in the conditions of a certain mortgage made by Mark A. Redfern and Lori Redfern, husband and wife, whose address is 52757 48th Avenue, Lawrence, Michigan 49064, as original Mortgagors, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Caliber Home Loans, Inc., being a mortgage dated July 6, 2018, and recorded on July 10, 2018 in Liber 1670 Page 995, Van Buren County Records, State of Michigan and then assigned through mesne assignments to NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing, as assignee as documented by an assignment dated November 8, 2023 and recorded on November 8, 2023 in Liber 1759 Page 25, Van Buren County Records, Michigan, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO AND 39/100 DOLLARS ($166,872.39). Said premises are situated in the Township of Lawrence, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, and are described as: PART OF THE NORTHEAST FRACTIONAL QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 4, TOWN 3 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST, LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER POST OF SAID SECTION 4: THENCE EAST ALONG THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 716.50 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A QUIT CLAIM DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 1133 ON PAGE 991 AND THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE CONTINUING EAST ALONG SAID NORTH LINE 15.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 393.42 FEET; THENCE WEST PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 25.40 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 390.00 FEET; THENCE EAST PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 458.00 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 1164.10 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE 676.565 FEET TO THE SOUTH LINE OF THE NORTH FRACTIONAL HALF OF SAID NORTHEAST FRACTIONAL QUARTER, ALSO BEING THE SOUTH LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A MEMORANDUM OF LAND CONTRACT RECORDED IN LIBER 1046 ON PAGE 21; THENCE NORTH 89 DEGREES 26' 32" WEST, ALONG SAID SOUTH LINE 488.08 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 676.10 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION, ALSO BEING THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A WARRANTY DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 0878 ON PAGE 038 OF VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE NORTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" WEST, ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE, 1237.233 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 218 FEET SOUTHERLY OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE EAST ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE 40.40 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 716.50 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION, ALSO BEING THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A QUIT CLAIM DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 1133 ON PAGE 991 OF VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE NORTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" WEST, ALONG THE FAST DESCRIBED LINE 218.00 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING. Street Address: 52757 48th Avenue, Lawrence, Michigan 49064 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless the property is determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA § 600.3241a in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of the sale. If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCLA § 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to

Continues on page 10

PUBLIC NOTICE
WAVERLY TOWNSHIP
2026 MARCH BOARD OF REVIEW

The Waverly Township March Board of Review for 2026 will be held at the Waverly Township Hall, 42114 M-43 Hwy, on the following dates:

March 3rd, 2026 (8:00am – 9:00am) = **Organizational Meeting – No Appeals**
March 9th, 2026 (10:00am – 1:00pm & 2:00pm - 5:00pm) = **Appeal Hearing***
March 10th, 2026 (2:00pm – 5:00pm & 6:00pm – 9:00 pm) = **Appeal Hearing***
*By Board resolution, residents are able to protest by letter, provided protest letter is received prior to March 10TH, 2026.
The tentative ratios and the estimated multipliers for each class of real property and personal property for 2026 are as follows:

Class	Ratio	Factor
*Agricultural	49.49%	1.01031
*Residential	47.68%	1.04866
*Personal Property	50.00%	1.00000
*Industrial	50.00%	1.00000
*Commercial	41.90%	1.19332

American With Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The Township will provide necessary reasonable services to individuals with disabilities at the Board of Review meetings upon (5) days notice.
Contact: (Starr Houston – 269-657-6847)

Anne Richmond, Assessor
Starr Houston, Clerk

Columbia Township
NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW HEARINGS

The Board of Review will be meeting in March to review the Assessment Roll and hear appeals. All meetings will be held at the Columbia Township Hall, 53033 CR 390, Grand Junction, Michigan 49056. The organizational meeting will be held on March 2nd, 2026 at 7:00 am. No appeals will be heard at the organizational meeting. *The appeal hearings will be held on March 9th from 3:00 Đm to 9:00 pm and March 10th. from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm* APPEALS ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.
Please contact the Columbia Township Assessor, Danielle Golembiewski by phone 269-225-9006 or by email at ***Assessor@ColumbiaTwp.com*** to make an appointment.
If the times available are not convenient, you may appeal by letter. Send letters and supporting documentation to Columbia Township, PO Box 323, Grand Junction, MI 49056. All letter appeals must be received by 2:00 p.m. 3-10-2026.

Monday March 9th 3:00pm to 9:00pm
Wednesday March 10th 9:00am to 3:00pm

Assessments have been adjusted to result in anticipated multipliers of 1.0000 for all classes. With "Proposal A" in effect, the Taxable Values, excluding new construction and ownership transfers, are capped at the inflation rate of 2.7% for the 2026 tax year. Taxes are based on the Taxable Value. Also, note that if you should have a Principal Residence Exemption on your property and this is not noted on your notice, you should contact the Assessor.

2026 Starting Ratios are as follows: Factors:

Ag:	49.31	Ag:	1.0139
Com:	46.18	Com:	1.0827
Ind:	49.21	Ind:	1.0160
Res:	46.68	Res:	1.0711
Personal:	50.00	Personal:	1.0000

Columbia Township Assessor, Danielle Golembiewski

NOTICE OF HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget for the Lawton Fire Department will be held in Council Chambers, Lawton Village Hall, 125 S. Main Street, March 05, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., local time, followed by the Regular Meeting of the Lawton Fire Department Board of Commissioners.

Bruce Cutting, Secretary

PINE GROVE TOWNSHIP
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING ON ANNUAL BUDGET NOTICE

The Pine Grove Township Board of Trustees will hold a Public Hearing on the proposed Township budget for fiscal year 4-1-2026 thru 3-31-2027 at 26520 CR 388, Gobles, MI, 49055, on **Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.** A copy of the budget is available for public inspection at Pine Grove Township Hall, 26520 CR 288, Gobles, MI 49055.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

This notice is posted in compliance with Public Act 267 of 1976 as amended (Open Meetings Act).

The Pine Grove Township Board will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting upon 3 days notice to the Pine Grove Township Board. **NOTE:** individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Pine Grove Township Board by writing or calling the following: Supervisor- Pam Visser, Clerk-Michelle Meert, Treasurer-Trena Sell, or Trustee-Ronald Huston or Donna Hephner, at 628-4380.

A copy of this notice is on file in the office of the clerk.

Michelle Meert, Clerk

TOWNSHIP OF ANTWERP
2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 24821 Front Ave., Mattawan, Michigan 49071, to examine and review the 2026 assessment roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 8:30 am Organizational Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

And on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 11, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	49.25%	1.0152
Commercial	45.61%	1.0963
Industrial	48.43%	1.0324
Residential	47.58%	1.0509
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Daniel J. Ruzick, Supervisor Antwerp Township

Ben Brousseau, Assessor Antwerp Township

Antwerp Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven-(7) days notice to Antwerp Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Antwerp Township by writing or calling.

Chantel Reyna
Antwerp Township Clerk
24821 Front Ave., Mattawan, MI 49071
269.668.2615 x200

TOWNSHIP OF PINE GROVE
2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 26520 C.R. 388, Gobles, MI 49055 to examine and review the 2026 assessment roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 4:30 pm Organizational Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

And on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 11, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	46.50%	1.0753
Commercial	47.03%	1.0632
Industrial	48.71%	1.0265
Residential	45.97%	1.0877
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Pam Visser, Supervisor Pine Grove Township

Ben Brousseau, Assessor Pine Grove Township

Pine Grove Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Pine Grove Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Pine Grove Township by writing or calling.

Michelle Meert
Pine Grove Township Clerk
26520 C.R. 388
Gobles, MI 49055

• CLASSIFIEDS •

• WANTED •

WE BUY OLD BASEBALL CARDS, OTHER SPORTS MEMORABILIA AND OLD VINTAGE COINS. CAN BE REACHED AT 517-416-1629. WE PAY CASH.

CLARK'S AUTO PARTS, INC. is buying cars, trucks & all metals for recycling. Lawrence, 674-4905 or 1-800-707-8650.

STANDING TIMBER. Top Michigan lumber manufacturer seeking landowners with 25 or more mature hardwood trees to sell. Qualityhardwoodsinc.com • 517-566-8061.

• SERVICES •

TIM'S STUMP GRINDING SERVICE- I believe in respectable service. 269-299-5052, 269-624-6884.

HAULING, CLEANING RECYCLING. Moving service. Right Quick Hauling. Dan Wydick, Dustin Wydick, Daniel Wydick, 423-8545. Serving since 1994.

FIELD PLUMBING & HEATING, INC. Services all brands of heating & cooling equipment in your home or business. 24/7 service for over 50 years, 269-674-3839.

MEDICARE INSURANCE RATES GOING UP
Call for a quote today Janet Bontrager Insurance Advisor (269) 998-6977

BUYING JUNK CARS, trucks, scrap metal and farm machinery. Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers, 1525 King Highway, Kalamazoo. 269-381-1315.

PRO HANDYMAN SERVICE
SOUTH HAVEN AREA Call 269-903-6397.

PERRY'S PERFECT PITCH PIANO TUNING
Homes-Churches-Schools, Call 269-999-4440

• FOR SALE •

HAY FOR SALE
5 x 4 round bales, first cut, available 40 bales. Storage and inside, $50 apiece, 773-816-7120, 847-553-5418. Lawrence area.

• AUCTIONS •

ALL SECURE SELF STORAGE will hold sale of abandoned property at a public sale pursuant in 540.521-570.527: Public Auction: 2/24/2026 at or after 9:30a.m. EST: 37404 W Red Arrow Highway Paw Paw: Rob Castner 2; Cyndi Martin, 58; Freida Wiessew, 201.

FOR MORE INFO OR TO PLACE AN AD Call (269) 657-3072 or 657-5080 BEFORE MONDAY AT 5PM

www.wil-coxnews-paper.com

=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

Continues from page 10

the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE.
Dated: January 29, 2026 For more information, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing: Robert A. Blumberg (P87490), Johnson, Blumberg, & Associates, LLC, 30 North LaSalle St., Suite 3650 Chicago, Illinois, 60602. Telephone: (312) 541-9710 File No.: MI 26 6935

(01-29)(02-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Matthew Craig; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: 527625F01; Insurer: FNMA
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Matthew Craig an unmarried man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: January 25, 2017
Date of Mortgage Recording: January 30, 2017
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $71,503.15
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Paw Paw, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: The Southwest 1/4 of Section 36, Town 3 South, Range 14 West, described as: beginning at the Southwest corner of said Section 36; thence North 00 degrees 28 minutes 57 seconds West, along the West line of said section, 990.0 feet; thence South 89 degrees 56 minutes 07 seconds East, 440.00 feet; thence South 00 degrees 28 minutes 57 seconds East, parallel with the West line of said section, 990.004 feet to the South line of said section; thence North 89 degrees 56 minutes 04 seconds West along said South line 440.00 feet to the place of beginning.
Common street address (if any): 35910 72nd Ave, Decatur, MI 49045-8700
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: January 29, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1582776

(01-29)(02-19)

PAW PAW TOWNSHIP
ORDINANCE NUMBER: 295
ADOPTED: 2-9-2026
EFFECTIVE DATE: 2-23-2026
ORDINANCE AMENDING PAW PAW TOWNSHIP'S SHORT-TERM RENTAL ORDINANCE

An ordinance to amend Section 41-06 of the Township's Code of Ordinances, concerning short-term rental to add provisions to cure violations and penalize recurrent violations; to provide for severability; to repeal all ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict therewith; and to provide an effective date.

PAW PAW TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN ORDAINS:

SECTION 1
AMENDMENT TO SECTION 41-06 (INSPECTIONS) OF THE PAW PAW TOWNSHIP CODE OF ORDINANCES
Section 41-06 (Inspections) of the Township's Code of Ordinances is hereby amended to revise subsection (g) to read entirely as follows:

g. If the Township becomes aware of code or other deficiencies or violations after the issuance or renewal of a permit, the Township may (upon verification) revoke the current permit and may also take any other action allowed by law.

1. Time to Correct Violations. All violation notices shall provide a specified time period to correct the violation(s) in relation to the seriousness of the violation(s). The following time limits shall apply:

a. Not more than 24 hours for an emergency violation.
b. Not more than ten days for removing domestic refuse; to provide adequate heat or water; or to correct hazardous conditions.
c. Not less than 30 days nor more than 60 days for all other violations.
d. Violation notices issued between October 31 and April 1 for exterior painting, or for any other exterior work adversely affected by cold or snow, shall provide additional time for completion of such work, but in no case longer than June 30.
e. The Township may extend the time period for correction of violations if:
   i. There are extending circumstances.
   ii. The responsible party has made a substantial and documented effort to correct violations within the time allotted. In no event shall the Township grant an extension for more than double the time period allowed in the original violation notice. All extensions shall be in writing and served on the responsible party in the same manner as the violation notice.

2. Recurrent Violations. A responsible party who violates any provision of this Chapter in or about the same rental unit(s) in the same structure three or more times in any consecutive 12-month period, or who does not correct a cited violation within 30 days after being convicted of, or found responsible for, violating a provision of this Chapter, shall be presumed to be a willful violator of the provisions of this Chapter and to be causing undue expense to the Township in the administration of this Chapter. In such cases:

a. The Township shall issue a final notice to repair after determining whether a violation still or again exists.
b. The Township shall specify the shortest time period permitted by this Chapter for the correction of any existing or further violation.
c. All inspections and/or re-inspection fees then in effect shall be doubled.
d. The Township may revoke the responsible owner's license to maintain a rental unit(s) and/or order all occupants of such rental unit(s) to vacate the premises.

SECTION 2: REPEAL
All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with any of the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3: SEVERABILITY
The provisions of this Ordinance are declared to be severable. If any court of law shall hold that any section or provision hereof is invalid, such holding shall not affect or impair the validity of any other section or provision of this Ordinance.

SECTION 4: EFFECTIVE DATE
This Ordinance shall take effect the day following the date of the publication after adoption.
YEAS: Thomas Palenick, Dennis Reynolds, Rebecca Payne, Lisa Zinkil, Jamus DeGros
NAYS: None

ORDINANCE DECLARED ADOPTED:
Thomas Palenick, Township Supervisor

I hereby certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of an ordinance made and adopted at a regular meeting of the governing body of this municipality on the 9th of February 2026.
Rebecca Payne, Township Clerk

WAVERLY TOWNSHIP NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION OF BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 4-1-26 THROUGH 03-31-27

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Budget Hearing and Adoption of the Budget for the fiscal year April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027 has been scheduled for **March 3, 2026 at 12:30 P.M.** at the Waverly Township Hall, 42114 M-43 Highway, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079

Starr Houston
Waverly Township Clerk

BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP 2026 NOTICE BOARD OF REVIEW

THE BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF REVIEW FOR 2026 WILL BE HELD AT THE BLOOMINGDALE TOWNSHIP HALL, 109 E. KALAMAZOO ST., BLOOMINGDALE, MI 49026 ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

MARCH, 3 2026 (3:30 pm)
ORGANIZATION MEETING
NO APPEALS NO APPEALS
MARCH 11, 2026 (9 am to 3 pm)
APPEAL HEARING
MARCH 13, 2026 (3pm to 9 pm)
APPEAL HEARING **

**ALL APPEALS WILL BE HEARD BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. PLEASE CALL 269-521-3800 EXT 4 TO SCHEDULE AN Appointment. BY BOARD RESOLUTION, RESIDENTS ARE ABLE TO PROTEST BY LETTER, PROVIDED PROTEST LETTER IS RECEIVED PRIOR TO MARCH 11th 2026 BY 5:00 PM.

TENTATIVE RATIOS AND ESTIMATED MULTIPLIERS FOR 2026 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

CLASS	RATIO	FACTOR
*Agricultural	43.11%	1.15982
*Residential	44.18%	1.13173
*Personal	50.00%	1.0000
*Commercial	45.68%	1.09457
*Industrial	49.03%	1.01978

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA) NOTICE:

The township will provide necessary reasonable services to individuals with disabilities at the Board of Review meetings upon (5) days' notice. Contact: Michael Richmond at 269-521-3800 ext. 4.

MICHAEL RICHMOND - ASSESSOR

TOWNSHIP OF PAW PAW 2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 114 N. Gremps St. Paw Paw, MI 49079, to examine and review the 2026 Assessment Roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 10:00 am Organizational Meeting
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm Monday, March 16, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

and on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 16, 2026. Address listed below.
Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	46.49%	1.0755
Commercial	45.76%	1.0927
Industrial	49.52%	1.0097
Residential	48.07%	1.0401
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.0000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Tom Palenick, Supervisor Paw Paw Township
Ben Brousseau, Assessor Paw Paw Township

Paw Paw Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex, or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Paw Paw Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Paw Paw Township by writing or calling.

Paw Paw Township Clerk
114 N. Gremps St.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-4340

TOWNSHIP OF ALMENA 2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 27625 CR 375, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079, to examine and review the 2026 Assessment Roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 7:00 am Organizational Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Thursday, March 12, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

and on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 12, 2026. Address listed below.
Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	50.58%	0.9885
Commercial	45.12%	1.1082
Industrial	52.48%	0.9527
Residential	46.84%	1.0675
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.0000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Joe Leduc, Supervisor Almena Township
Ben Brousseau, Assessor Almena Township

Almena Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Almena Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Almena Township by writing or calling.

Sandra Rickli
Almena Township Clerk
27625 County Road 375
Paw Paw, MI 49079
269.668.6910

Fur Ball fundraiser to benefit Al-Van Humane Society

By James Windell

The Black River Barn will turn into the location of Breakfast at Tiffany's – the theme of the Fur Ball – when the Al-Van Humane Society celebrates its glamorous fundraiser on Saturday, February 21, 2026.

Fur Ball, which is held every two years, is the largest fundraiser for Al-Van Humane Society. Funds that are raised will provide critical support for shelter operations and help provide food, shelter, medical care, and other essential resources for the homeless pets of Van Buren and Allegan counties.

In an interview on February 12, Jordan Freeburn, Marketing & Development Coordinator for Al-Van, said that tickets were going fast. "We're almost all sold out on tickets," Freeburn noted, "and we've just added more tickets for any last-minute purchasers. But if there are people who still want to be a part of the fundraiser there are other ways of participating."

She said that even if people don't attend the ball, they can be part of a silent auction that will take place on their website. "The silent auction is all done online," Freeburn said. "Even if they can't attend the event that night, they can still participate by bidding on some of the great items included in the auction."

The glamorous evening includes dinner, a cash bar, live and silent auctions, and dueling pianos. Guests are encouraged to dress in their finest attire and maybe even add a

Breakfast at Tiffany's flair to their look. "Black tie is optional," Freeburn said, "but we'll definitely have some people who will want to go all out and get dressed up. Other people will be a little more casual. It's really up to you. However, I've heard from some people who are putting an Audrey Hepburn spin on their outfits this year – so some will be sporting a Hollywood glam style."

Cindy Moreen, President of Al-Van's Board of Directors says that "The number of animals coming through our doors continues to grow, and the cost of providing food, shelter, and medical care continues to rise. Fur Ball has never been more important to ensure we can provide the best possible care for every animal that comes through our doors."

According to Freeburn, Al-Van provides services for 300 to 400 animals each year. "Last year we had 346 adoptions," Freeburn said. "That was very exciting."

Al-Van's mission is to compassionately serve the companion animals in our community by providing the best shelter, adoptive homes, education and resources available. "We're hoping to expand our community outreach programs," Freeburn pointed out. "We will be going out in the community to reach as many people as possible and provide education and services to pets."

After Fur Ball, she said as an example, that Al-Van will be partnering with the Michigan Maritime Museum for a Humane Education Day. "We will have activities for kids and talk to them about what a humane society does and how to best interact with animals," Freeburn said.

Fur Ball 2026: Breakfast at Tiffany's will be on February 21, 2026, starting at 6:00 pm at Black River Barn, 07737 73rd Street, South Haven. Tickets are $150. To learn more Fur Ball, to check on the availability of tickets, or to participate in the silent auction, visit al-van.org/furball or call (269)637-5062.

South Haven Schools holds first vision alignment

By James Windell

Thirty South Haven residents came together on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at South Haven High School to participate as the Vision Alignment Team.

School Superintendent Ana Aleman-Putman said began the proceedings by thanking the people who agreed to be part of the Vision Alignment Team for their flexibility and commitment.

"The purpose of the meeting is to begin crucial work on vision alignment for South Haven Public Schools," Aleman-Putman said, "which will impact programming, resource allocation, and the broader strategic plan. The district's strategic plan aims to connect decisions and ensure they are designed to support student learning and long-term success, rather than being isolated choices."

She went on to emphasize belongingness for all students and the importance of community involvement, noting personal ties to the district and its significance as a community hub.

She then turned it over to Michael Posthumus and Sara Melton, the facilitators for the evening, who were representatives from Fielding International. After introducing themselves and describing their global and Midwest experience in school design and leadership, they outlined the "ecosystem" approach: starting with vision development, then moving to educational programming, and finally aligning the learning environment.

Melton noted that a written vision and values often do not match actual practice – hence the need for meaningful alignment. She said that the process involves several sessions which will be devoted to developing a vision, establishing guiding principles, creating a succinct and actionable strategic plan, and sharing outcomes with the broader community.

Posthumus and Melton then had all of the participants introduce themselves. It was found that the people on the Vision Alignment team represented a wide cross-section of the community: school staff, administrators, community leaders, parents, retirees, and business/community partners.

Some of the prominent themes that emerged from the introductions were that the team included strong multigenerational ties to the community, a desire for better facilities (especially athletic facilities), a focus on STEM/robotics, support for new and diverse programming, and excitement about opportunities for student success. Several participants noted the importance of community-school connections, leveraging unique local resources (including tourism), and ensuring that education serves all students, regardless of their postgraduation path.

Posthumus and Melton then facilitated the participants to explore the purpose of education and skills students need to learn for success. Melton started this discussion by giving a brief history showing how the purposes of education have evolved over the last couple of hundred years. This, she noted, saw schools evolve from agrarian skill-building to standardized efficiency to the modern need for adaptable, critical thinkers. The group then engaged in the "five whys" exercise to identify the ultimate purpose of South Haven schools. Participants decided that the purpose of our school system is to cultivate critical thinkers, promote life skills, educate young people to become community contributors, and to prepare students to live successfully and cooperatively in a multicultural world.

When participants divided into small groups, they discussed and then posted key skills/knowledge that students need, including empathy, teamwork, communication, flexibility, curiosity, problem-solving, technological literacy (including AI), a sense of history, resourcefulness, self-confidence, and real-world exposure. The importance of both content knowledge and essential life/soft skills was emphasized, with several parallels drawn to global workforce trends.

Melton and Posthumus said that they would synthesize participant input to draft a joint purpose statement and a list of priority skills, to be reviewed and validated in the future through a broader community survey and ongoing focus groups. They said that the alignment process will continue with more meetings, building tours, and community engagement, with an eye toward actionable planning for programming and facilities.

The participants were encouraged to consider where the identified skills are already being taught or modeled in the community. In the future the Vision Alignment Team will hold more meetings, and the facilitators will organize upcoming focus groups and building tours, ensuring all district departments are represented. They also suggested inviting recent graduates or young alumni to become part of the team in order to provide insights on their South Haven experience and its impact.

The Vision Alignment community members will meet next on February 24, 2026.

City Council holds strategic planning workshop

By James Windell

The South Haven City Council, along with the City Manager, the Mayor, and other South Haven officials, held a strategic planning and priorities workshop on Monday, February 9, 2026 at the Northside Municipal Marina.

Led by consultant Al Vandenberg, the workshop objectives were for the City Council to engage in strategic planning and priority-setting for the future of the City. Following a statement of the objectives, updates were given by various city staff, including the City Engineer, Mike Dopp.

Dopp gave a detailed report on several projects that included the Four Season Pavilion project, as well as on the resurfacing of many street and maintenance projects. Dopp said that the Department of Public Works and the City place an emphasis on asset management and prioritizing based on funding constraints.

Council members then discussed the public perception and noted complaints about road conditions, funding limitations, and the need to update the city's seven-year plan.

Following that discussion, Vanderberg led a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) session that invited comments and discussion from the City Council members as well as Kate Hosier, the City Manager, and others who were from various City departments.

Facilitating a listing of the City's strength, the end result was a long list of the strengths of South Haven. Among those listed were the City's staff, Lake Michigan, South Haven's small-town charm, the schools, the downtown area, the many green spaces, the vibrant business community, the City's museums, the Van Buren Area Senior Services, and citizen engagement.

Vandenberg then moved on to identifying the City's weaknesses. Participants cited the following weaknesses: School rankings, collaboration with other units, aging infrastructure, housing inventory, cost of living, enforcement of ordinances, short-term rentals, board appointment processes, local healthcare access, seasonal housing, and more.

But opportunities were also discussed and listed. Opportunities available for the City include enhanced collaboration with townships and Holtec, expanding housing types, flexible zoning, recreation and park buildout, leveraging Lake Michigan College, Michigan Green Communities participation, increased population (with a focus on families and younger residents), arts/culture, and economic development.

Finally, there were threats that were also discussed. These included an aging and declining population, housing affordability, short-term rental backlog, water/sewer capacity, talent attraction, high construction costs, lack of proactive planning, loss of diversity, school population declines, natural risks (e.g., water levels), and healthcare access.

Vandenberg then led the group into brainstorming some possible action items. Some of the ideas that came out of brainstorming were renewing road and narcotics millages, consider expanding narcotics program, increased housing, especially in Ward One, and broader city infill projects. Other ideas were to establish a housing consortium and develop strategies; updating a code of ordinances; asset management prioritization for sewer/water; finishing the master plan; maintain collaboration with SHAWSA for infrastructure; addressing urgent care and year-round medical facility needs; pursuing energy independence and sustainability; and amending the zoning ordinances for accessory dwelling and three-dwelling units.

The workshop ended with Vandenberg promising to prepare a summary memo and matrix of prioritization results. The City Council is to review the matrix and select two to three main priorities for resource allocation. Other lower-priority or ongoing items will be placed in a "parking lot" for potential future action. It was agreed that future meetings would be planned to involve stakeholders in discussing various priorities.

Community Foundation accepting grant applications

By James Windell

The South Haven Area Community Foundation (SHACF) is accepting grant applications from nonprofits, school systems or municipal governments through March 15, 2026.

According to SHACF Administrator, Kristie Abruzzo, The South Haven Community Foundation will only consider grant applications from organizations for projects within the service area that meet one or more of the Foundation's Priorities: Education, Economic Development, Arts, and Culture.

"In general, eligibility for a grant from SHACF, your agency, or the people your agency works with, must be in communities that are economically, educationally, and socially connected to South Haven and the surrounding areas," Abruzzo says. "Currently included are the municipalities of Casco, Lee and Pullman in Allegan County, and South Haven, Geneva, Columbia, Covert, Bangor, and Arlington in Van Buren County."

Abruzzo says that SHACF has established a 3-year strategic plan focused on growth and increasing the foundation's impact on the South Haven area community.

The South Haven Area Community Foundation was formally established in 2005 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its founding purpose was to create a permanent, endowed source of charitable support for the Greater South Haven area. SHACF seeks forward-thinking projects that respond to local needs, strengthen quality of life, and bring partners together to create lasting community impact. To date, it has awarded over a million dollars to local organizations.

In the current grant application cycle, Tier One and Tier Two applications are being accepted. "Tier one is a lessor amount – up to $1000 – but it can be used for operating costs," Abruuzo explains. "Small non-profits or first year non-profits may find this helpful. Most foundations will not fund any operating costs so in this way we are able to fill a gap." She says that Tier Two grants will accommodate grantees seeking $1,001 up to $10,000 for project costs only. Applicants will be asked to select a Tier upon applying and will be limited to one application per grant cycle.

Applications and grant details are available online at www.southhavencf.org/grants. The deadline to submit is March 15, 2026, and grant awardees will be notified in May.

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